

There was no objection.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1927, the African American Civil Rights Network Act, introduced by our distinguished committee colleague, Congressman LACY CLAY from Missouri, directs the National Park Service to identify and create a national network of historic sites, research facilities, and educational programs connected to the modern African-American civil rights movement. The network will be comprised of existing units and programs of the National Park Service related to the African-American civil rights movement as well as the properties and programs of other Federal, State, local, and private entities that join the network.

Establishing this network of historic sites connected to the African-American civil rights movement will help preserve the legacy and the struggle of the many courageous individuals who risked their lives to secure racial equality and to put the full measure of the Declaration of Independence and its sacred principles into action.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of this measure, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the African American Civil Rights Network Act of 2017, updated and bipartisan legislation that I was proud to introduce along with my distinguished colleague from Missouri's Eighth Congressional District, Congressman JASON SMITH. I appreciate his leadership and true friendship as well.

Our legislation, which has already earned 72 cosponsors, would authorize the National Park Service to establish a program to preserve and protect the memory of the people and places that were significant in the struggle to securing equal rights for African Americans during the 20th century's civil rights era between 1939 and 1968.

The purpose of this legislation is to recognize, protect, and share the remarkable American story of the modern struggle for civil rights, a unique national experience that touches every American regardless of their age, region, or heritage, and yet this very American story is often left untold, without the level of honesty and accuracy that it surely deserves.

In fact, the generation now coming of age has only scant knowledge of the history of the civil rights struggle. Young Americans find it difficult to believe that racial segregation was once considered normal and necessary in the United States.

I truly believe that the healing potential for this legislation is essential to bringing our Nation together. The historic network that H.R. 1927 would create would offer tremendous educational opportunities by recognizing those brave souls from all walks of life

who fought to make the promises enshrined in our Constitution finally ring true for every American regardless of the color of their skin.

Across this great country, precious historic waypoints along the routes of that still largely untold story are at risk of being lost forever.

My hope is that the historic civil rights trails and the programs that will grow from this act will honestly tell the truth, the full and sometimes painful story of the struggle for civil rights, not just for African Americans, but to foster healing, tolerance, and understanding among all Americans.

This bill is similar to legislation that created the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act of 1998, which is currently administered by the National Park Service. It directs the Secretary of the Interior to identify and create a national network of historic sites, stories, research facilities, and educational programs connected to the modern African-American civil rights movement.

This legislation has also earned the strong support of the National Urban League, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Parks Conservation Association, and the NAACP.

Mr. Speaker, let me also commend the gentleman from California for his support of this legislation that came out of his subcommittee. I appreciate his help and strong support of it.

I look at this opportunity as something that we should all want to embrace the transformative power of the real American story. We should seize it. This bill advances that worthy goal for our Nation, and I urge my colleagues to support this important act.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Utah (Mrs. LOVE).

Mrs. LOVE. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman MCCLINTOCK for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1927. Nearly a decade ago, the National Park Service, with the help of the Organization of American Historians, completed a study to help identify significant sites related to the modern civil rights movement. Through this effort, the National Park Service found that many sites with a connection to the movement had not been formally recognized and that many were in severe disrepair and at risk of being permanently lost.

This legislation establishes a network of sites to include all National Park Service's units and programs, as well as other Federal, State, local, and privately owned properties for the National Register of Historic Places.

A similar network was created previously by Congress to identify and commemorate the sites and stories related to the underground railroad. This bill would allow the National Park Service to build partnerships with other public and private entities to help preserve the remaining sites.

As part of my religious beliefs, I believe that knowing who you are, where you come from, is a foundation of knowing where you are and where you will be going.

History teaches us important lessons that we need to learn and grow from. Because of great leaders like Martin Luther King, President Abraham Lincoln, Rosa Parks, and many unsung heroes, I am here today as a Member of Congress representing the great State of Utah. We can be proud of who we are and what we believe in, that all men are created equal in the eyes of God.

It is imperative that here in the United States, that we don't make people feel like victims, and that all Americans are not afraid of, but empowered by, their history and our future.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Representative CLAY for his sponsorship of this bill, and I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1927.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time to close.

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to commend my colleague, Mrs. LOVE from Utah. And it goes to show you that we can reach across the aisle and find common ground. I appreciate her support of this legislation, as well as I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I would like to reciprocate the kind words of the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY). It has been a pleasure working with him on this bill.

Shakespeare put it best:

This story shall a good man teach his son.

This bill tells that story of how the full measure of our Nation's founding principles came to fruition.

I would ask for Members' support and adoption of this measure, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1927, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CALLING FOR UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF U.S. CITIZENS AND PERMANENT RESIDENTS HELD FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES BY THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 317) calling for the unconditional release of United States citizens and legal permanent resident aliens being held for political purposes by the Government of Iran, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 317

Whereas Iran has taken as hostages several United States citizens, including Siamak and Baquer Namazi and Xiyue Wang, as well as United States legal permanent resident, Nizar Zakka;

Whereas Siamak Namazi was detained on October 15, 2015, falsely accused, and convicted on October 18, 2016, for “collaborating with a hostile government” and has been held for extended periods in solitary confinement and under constant interrogation;

Whereas former UNICEF official Baquer Namazi, the 80-year old father of Siamak Namazi, was detained on February 22, 2016, falsely accused, and sentenced to 10 years in prison for the same crime as his son;

Whereas former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged Iranian authorities to release Baquer Namazi, whose health status is deteriorating, to allow his family to care for him;

Whereas UNICEF has issued four public statements on Baquer Namazi’s behalf;

Whereas Xiyue Wang, a graduate student at Princeton University, was arrested in Iran on or about August 7, 2016, while studying Farsi and researching the late Qajar dynasty as background for his doctoral dissertation, detained by Iran in Evin prison for almost a year, falsely charged with espionage, and sentenced to 10 years in prison;

Whereas Robert Levinson, a United States citizen and retired agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, traveled to Kish Island, Iran, and disappeared on March 9, 2007;

Whereas the United States Government had “secured a commitment from the Iranians . . . to try and gather information about Mr. Levinson’s possible whereabouts” but has not received any information thus far;

Whereas Nizar Zakka, a United States legal permanent resident alien and Lebanese national, who is also in a weakened physical state, was unlawfully detained around September 18, 2015, after presenting at a conference in Iran at Iran’s invitation, and was later falsely charged with being a spy and sentenced to 10 years at the Evin prison;

Whereas, on April 13, 2017, the Department of the Treasury sanctioned the Tehran Prisons Organization and its former head, Sohrab Soleimani, and White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer noted “The sanctions against human rights abusers in Iran’s prisons come at a time when Iran continues to unjustly detain in its prisons various foreigners, including US citizens Siamak Namazi and Baquer Namazi”;

Whereas, on April 25, 2017, at the meeting of the Joint Commission overseeing implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the Department of State reported that the United States delegation had “raised with the Iranian delegation its serious concerns regarding the cases of U.S. citizens detained and missing in Iran, and called on Iran to immediately release these U.S. citizens so they can be reunited with their families”;

Whereas elements of the Iranian regime are reportedly using nationals, dual-nationals, and permanent residents from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, and other countries to exact political or financial concessions; and

Whereas reports indicate that the Government of Iran is seeking additional payments or other concessions, including relief from economic sanctions, from the families of hostages and their governments as a condition of release, a practice banned by the 1979

International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages and other international legal norms: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) calls on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to release unconditionally Siamak Namazi, Baquer Namazi, Xiyue Wang, Nizar Zakka, and any other United States citizen, legal permanent resident alien, or foreign national being unjustly detained in Iran;

(2) urges the President to make the release of United States citizens and legal permanent resident aliens held hostage by the Government of Iran the highest of priorities;

(3) requests that the United States and its allies whose nationals have been detained consider establishing a multinational task force to secure the release of the detainees;

(4) urges the Government of Iran to take meaningful steps towards fulfilling its repeated promises to assist in locating and returning Robert Levinson, including immediately providing all available information from all entities of the Government of Iran regarding the disappearance of Robert Levinson to the United States Government;

(5) encourages the President to take meaningful action to secure the release of Siamak Namazi, Baquer Namazi, Xiyue Wang, Nizar Zakka, and any other United States citizen, legal permanent resident alien, or foreign national being unjustly detained in Iran if the Government of Iran does not release such United States citizens, legal permanent resident aliens, and foreign nationals; and

(6) encourages the President to take meaningful action to secure the return of Robert Levinson if the Government of Iran does not locate and return him.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, this particular resolution calls for the unconditional release of American citizens and legal permanent residents that are being held as prisoners right now, being held in jail by the Iranian regime.

I would like to begin by thanking the ranking member and the chair of our Middle East Subcommittee—and that is both Ms. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, the chair, who is with us, and Mr. TED DEUTCH—for their tireless work on behalf of these victims and on behalf of the families. They have introduced this resolution along with Congresswoman NITA LOWEY and Congressman Judge TED POE.

The reason for it, as you all know, is that Iran just continues to engage in this despicable practice of detaining

people who are visiting Iran, and then they come up with fabricated criminal charges, and then these innocent people are held captive; but not just held captive, it is the brutal conditions which they find themselves in.

When we have talked to those and they have shown us what they have been through, these former prisoners in Iran, these Americans, they describe being subjected to electric shock, to forced drug withdrawal, through whippings, solitary confinement, they are denied medical care oftentimes, and routinely forced to sleep on the floor, if they are permitted to sleep at all.

Right now we have a number of U.S. citizens, Siamak and Baquer Namazi, Xiyue Wang, and U.S. permanent resident Nizar Zakka.

These U.S. citizens and permanent residents were imprisoned after being falsely accused of collaborating with a hostile government or accused of espionage. Their families are paralyzed with fear about how they are being treated.

Why is Iran so intent on holding Americans on bogus politicized charges?

It is because the Iranian regime believes it can use detained Americans as leverage to demand concessions, like ransom or sanctions relief, in violation of the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages.

□ 1445

U.S. citizen Robert Levinson, he is still missing, and this is after 10 years. He disappeared 10 years ago in Iran, and Iran has not remotely fulfilled its commitment to try to help locate him.

Our committee has held multiple hearings with these prisoners’ families, most recently yesterday, when family Members testified before our Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee, and we thank them for their bravery in sharing their stories.

We stand in solidarity with these citizens and with their families as we call for their release. We can’t imagine the horror that one would be experiencing, but our hearts are with you, and we are committed to advocate on behalf of you and your loved ones.

H. Res. 317 calls on Iran to let these Americans, and all individuals being unjustly detained by Iran, come home. And it also calls on Iran to fulfill its many promises to help find Bob Levinson. It also urges the President to prioritize release of these captives and encourages him to take meaningful action to secure their release.

Last week, the administration called on Iran to release these unjustly detained U.S. citizens, or to face new and serious consequences. We appreciate the administration’s actions so far and, with this resolution, urge continual attention to this matter until all of these prisoners have been safely returned to their families.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of this measure. Let me thank Chairman ROYCE, because here again is another piece of legislation from the Foreign Affairs Committee that we have shown we can work together within a bipartisan manner; so I am pleased to stand with the chairman.

I am also pleased to stand with the gentlewoman from Florida, former chairman, and my good friend as well, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN. She is now chair of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, along with the resolution's other lead sponsors, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY), the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DEUTCH), the Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee's ranking member, and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE).

We are here today to talk about Americans illegally detained by the Iranian regime, and those Americans have had no stronger champions than the Members I have mentioned before through the years.

Mr. Speaker, it is just outrageous that the Government of Iran continues to hold American citizens and residents on trumped-up charges.

Siamak Namazi and his 80-year-old father, a former UNICEF official in poor health; Baquer Namazi; Karan Vafadari, an American citizen, and his wife, Afarin Niasari; Nizar Zakka, who was detained after attending a conference at Iran's invitation; another American citizen who has been kept anonymous by family for fear of that person's well-being; and, of course, Robert Levinson, who disappeared in Iran more than 10 years ago. How cruel—10 years. His family doesn't know where he is. His family doesn't know how he is.

This is a regime, the Iranian regime, which talks about piety and religion, and they don't have any feeling of humankind from one person to another.

The detainment and disappearance of these people, and citizens of America's friends and allies, the pain and suffering and uncertainty that their families endure every single day, and the lack of cooperation and information coming out of Tehran, are a pretty clear indication of how this regime operates and what its values are.

The measure we are considering today underscores what Congress has said before: This behavior is unacceptable, and it must stop. We call on the government in Iran to release these men and women immediately, without precondition.

The people of Iran are the real captives of this regime, but these American citizens are our citizens, and we demand their release. The Government of Iran must do what it has long promised by providing information on the disappearance of Robert Levinson, and we urge the Trump administration to make resolving this issue a top priority.

So I am glad to stand with my colleagues on both sides to support this

measure. I, again, thank my friend from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for, as always, outstanding, stellar, and heartfelt work on these issues.

I thank Chairman ROYCE again, and all the people I mentioned before.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN), who chairs the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, the author of this measure.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman ROYCE, as well as my good friend, the ranking member, Mr. ENGEL, for their help in bringing H. Res. 317 to the floor today and for their tireless efforts to hold the Iranian regime accountable for all of its illicit activity, including the taking of American citizens and U.S. legal permanent residents as hostages. They have been incredible supporters of this movement, and I thank them for their unwavering support.

Of course, I want to thank Ranking Member NITA LOWEY for her help—I had the opportunity of meeting one of the family members with her before this presentation—and Judge POE, who is always at our side; and my south Florida colleague and my dear friend, TED DEUTCH, the ranking member on our Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee. We have all joined together in authoring and introducing this resolution.

The resolution, Mr. Speaker, is important for all of us. But for TED DEUTCH, for my friend from south Florida, I know how very personal this is for him because it is his constituent, Bob Levinson, who continues to be held by Iran 10 years after his disappearance.

Just yesterday, Ted and I convened a hearing in our Middle East and North Africa Subcommittee with some of the family members who are named in this very resolution.

Doug Levinson, for example, Bob's youngest child, testified.

Babak Namazi, son of Baquer and brother of Siamak testified.

Omar Zakka, son of Nizar, testified.

All three of them testified before our subcommittee, and their stories were moving, they were heartfelt, and they were heartbreaking. Each one, along with their families, forced to live in their own personal hell.

In Doug Levinson's case, Mr. Speaker, he presented photos, emails, even videos of his father who, after more than 10 years, is the Nation's longest held hostage in our history. What a sad distinction.

We heard how Iran has reportedly and repeatedly failed to live up to its promise to assist in Bob's case and help return him to his loved ones, including the five grandchildren that Bob has yet to meet.

We heard Omar plead for his father's life, as Nizar is now 1 month into his

fifth hunger strike. But this time, Mr. Speaker, Nizar has vowed that there will be no turning back. Nizar says that he will continue with his hunger strike for himself and the others who are unjustly held by Iran, stating, it is "liberty or death; there is no turning back."

So can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, being 19 years old, a teenager, and he is testifying in front of us yesterday, and he is hearing his father say that he is willing to die in Iran in pursuit of truth and justice, and his throat was breaking as he is testifying in front of us.

We also heard Babak distress over the health of his father and his brother, two loved ones. Mr. Namazi's father has lost more than 30 pounds in Iran's notorious prisons. He is 81 years old. He suffers from a severe heart condition. He had to be hospitalized twice in just the past few months. Babak fears that his father's physical and mental condition—they are both rapidly deteriorating.

His brother, he fears, has given up hope because of the horrific conditions he is being held under. He is kept in isolation. He is mentally abused. He is physically abused. That is horrifying. That is heartbreaking.

Though we heard the sorrow in their voices, Mr. Speaker, we also heard defiance and determination. Defiant in accepting the Iranian regime's absurd claims against Bob, against Baquer, against Siamak, against Nizar; defiant in accepting that their fates are sealed, that there is nothing more that can be done; defiant in remaining silent as their loved ones suffer under the terror regime in Tehran.

We saw their determination—determination as each of the witnesses before us yesterday vowed that their fight is not nearly over, that they remain determined that they can force the return of their loved ones.

And they looked to us, Mr. Speaker, they looked to us to use our positions as Members of the United States House of Representatives to pressure the Iranian regime to release all American citizens, all American legal permanent residents, unconditionally.

They looked to us to demand that Iran be held accountable for its tactic of taking our people hostage in order to get financial or political concessions. They looked to us to stand up and to decry this practice for what it is—morally corrupt, ethically corrupt, and legally wrong.

That is why NITA, and TED, and Judge POE, and Chairman ROYCE, and Ranking Member ENGEL, and I introduced this resolution before us today, and that is why Ted and I convened our hearing yesterday; and that is why, today, I am urging all of our colleagues to stand in solidarity with us, with the family members, with the hostages, and demand that Iran release all American citizens and legal permanent residents that it is holding hostage immediately and unconditionally.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. ROYCE of California. I yield the gentlewoman an additional 1 minute.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I hope that our colleagues will indeed stand with us. I hope that this resolution sends a strong message to Iran that this practice will not be tolerated. And I hope that it sends a strong message to our own administration that Congress is heavily invested in the fate of Americans being held by Iran and that we will demand action to win their unconditional release, their immediate release.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, it is now my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY), my esteemed colleague, friend, and ranking member of the Appropriations Committee. We have districts that are adjoining.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to thank my very good friends, Chairman ED ROYCE, Ranking Member ELIOT ENGEL, my fellow New Yorker, and the strong advocate, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN. I want to thank them for advancing this very important resolution.

I rise in strong support of H. Res. 317, which I introduced with my friends, Representatives ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, TED DEUTCH, and TED POE. This resolution calls for the unconditional release of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents being held on baseless charges by the Government of Iran.

Two of these prisoners, Siamek Namazi and Baquer Namazi, were previously my constituents when they last lived in the United States. I have had the honor of getting to know Babak Namazi, the courageous brother and son of these two prisoners, who has tirelessly worked to free them from unjust imprisonment.

While the Iranian Government continues to try and exact concessions with these prisoners from the United States, Baquer Namazi, an 80-year-old former UNICEF leader, suffers from increasingly poor health in Evin Prison. A man who spent his entire life serving the world's most vulnerable should not, cannot, spend his final years in such terrible conditions.

But this is just one prisoner's story. Each of the United States' citizen and legal permanent resident prisoners is suffering while imprisoned on trumped-up charges. Each has family members who worry, every hour of the day, whether they will ever see their loved ones again.

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The United States must do all we can to ensure these prisoners return home. This resolution sends a strong message to the Government of Iran. These heinous attempts will not pay off. All of the prisoners must be released immediately. And Iran must fulfill its previous promises to locate and return Representative DEUTCH's constituent, Robert Levinson, a U.S. citizen missing in Iran since 2007.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I thank everyone who helped advance this resolution.

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE). He is the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time. I want to thank him and the ranking member for moving this legislation forward.

Mr. Speaker, Iran is the number one state sponsor of terrorism in the whole world. Out of 195 countries, they are the worst country in the world when it comes to exporting terrorism.

The mullahs in Tehran not only support worldwide terrorist groups, terrorist groups that have American blood on their hands, they resort to terrorist tactics to extort and blackmail the American people.

For decades, Iran has held American citizens in prisons unlawfully. They detain these Americans under the charge of espionage. We all know that this is just a ploy to extract concessions from the United States.

Earlier this month, we learned that Iran threw another American citizen in jail last year. This time it was a Princeton Ph.D. student conducting research in Iran for his dissertation. This student is now being held in Iran's most notorious prison, Evin Prison. If anyone thought that Iran was going to moderate as a result of the nuclear deal, these ongoing unlawful detentions are evidence to the contrary.

Iran has been emboldened, and there is no indication they will stop this tactic of terror. We need to get the attention of the barbaric mullahs that seem to take delight in imprisoning Americans and even Iranian citizens for political reasons.

We know at least eight Americans currently languish in Iranian jails. Iran is not content with just holding these Americans. They are actively working to extract payments and concessions from the United States, like sanctions relief, as a condition for their release. This is old-fashioned textbook extortion.

This resolution will send a clear message to the mullahs: Release the Americans and return them to their homes. Let the American hostages go.

I was glad to see the new sanctions imposed by the Treasury in April on the Tehran Prisons Organization. More pressure is needed by our country.

I urge the administration to spare no effort to secure the release of American hostages. These hostages have been held by Iran too long, and Iran has proven that they do not respond very well to carrots. Since we gave away the courthouse and the mineral rights in the Iranian deal, maybe it is time we pull out the stick. As Teddy Roosevelt said: "Speak softly, and carry a big stick."

And that is just the way it is.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE), who has worked tirelessly to free his constituent from the Iranian regime.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 317, calling for the unconditional release of United States citizens held by Iran.

Unfortunately, I am all too familiar with this issue. My constituent, and now my good friend, Amir Hekmati, a Marine veteran, was held by the Iranian regime in Evin Prison for 4½ brutal years.

Thankfully, after a long struggle with the help of many voices across the country and across the world, including my friends, the ranking member and the chairman of this committee, who both used their good offices to advance the interests of Mr. Hekmati, ultimately he was freed. On January 16, 2016, he came home.

But it is long past time for Iran to release those Americans that they are holding, particularly Mr. Levinson, with whom I became quite familiar and whose family I came to know during the period of time that I sought freedom for Mr. Hekmati. Mr. Levinson's family has endured 10 unspeakable years of anguish trying to bring their father and husband home.

If Iran ever wants to be taken seriously in the global community, it has to stop this practice of taking innocent people as political prisoners, people like Amir Hekmati, people like Mr. Levinson, and those other Americans being held today.

It is also important to note, both for us here in this body, across the country, particularly for those watching in other parts of the world, including Iran, that there are times when we have divisions in this country. There are times when we have divisions in our government, even on the floor of this House of Representatives. This is not one of them. We stand absolutely united as Democrats, as Republicans, as Independents, as Americans, saying to the Iranian Government and speaking through the Iranian people to their government: You cannot take political prisoners and hold them and expect to be taken seriously as a member of the global community.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, to send that strong message, to pass this resolution. I thank the sponsors of this resolution. I thank the chair and ranking member for their leadership on this issue now, and particularly at a time when my constituent most needed it, and I pray for the same success for those Americans that are being held now.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday this House spoke in no uncertain terms, in a bipartisan fashion, about what we think of Iran's dangerous and destabilizing

behavior. An overwhelming bipartisan majority voted to slap tough new sanctions on Iran for its ballistic missile program, for the regime's support for terrorism, and for the awful record of human rights abuses against the Iranian people.

Tehran should know that we mean business. We will not back down on any of these issues, and we certainly will not forget that Americans are being wrongfully held.

I am glad to go on record once again, along with my colleagues, Chairman ROYCE, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, NITA LOWEY, everyone who has spoken today, shining a line on this abuse, to put it front and center in our foreign policy, to call on Iran's leaders to release these people, and to say they will not be forgiven as long as these people are unlawfully held.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to vote "yes." I am happy that we are bringing this important issue to the fore, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would just say that the individuals that we are talking about, the Americans that are being held in captivity and their families, have been suffering for far too long. I think our country needs to take decisive action to secure their release, and I believe that we have got to make sure that Iran and all other hostile actors who would follow Iran down this road know that taking U.S. prisoners does not pay.

I again thank Mr. ENGEL and the gentlewoman and gentleman from Florida, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN and TED DEUTCH, for their leadership, along with NITA LOWEY and TED POE.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution as the next step toward bringing these innocent people back home to the United States, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 317, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2018

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material in the consideration of H.R. 3219, and that I may include tabular material on the same.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN). Is there objection to the re-

quest of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 473 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 3219.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. BOST) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1511

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 3219) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2018, and for other purposes, with Mr. BOST in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time. General debate shall be confined to the bill and not exceed 2 hours equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations.

The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY) each will control 60 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 6 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to present an amendment to H.R. 3219, the Make America Secure Appropriations Act. This legislative package provides critical appropriations for national security, including for the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Energy's nuclear programs, and the Legislative Branch bill.

My colleagues, this is the primary constitutional duty of the Congress: to ensure the safety of the homeland and the American people.

This legislation is carefully crafted to meet that responsibility: funding our critical military priorities, supporting veterans, and making our borders more secure.

The core of this package is full-year funding for the Department of Defense and the intelligence community. I thank Chairwoman GRANGER for her leadership.

In total, the Defense portion of the bill provides \$658.1 billion for these functions, an increase of \$68.1 billion in base discretionary funding above the fiscal year 2017 enacted levels.

There is no doubt that this is a significant increase from the current spending levels, and certainly from the last 8 years. But this increase is vitally important to continue the process we started this spring: to rebuild, repair, and re-equip our Armed Forces that we started in the 2017 appropriations package.

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Mr. Chairman, Secretary of Defense Mattis has quite correctly made readiness and modernization of our forces his top priorities.

It is a fact today that we have too many aircraft that cannot fly, too many ships that cannot sail, and too many troops who cannot deploy either because they are not properly trained or there are not enough of them.

So how did we get there? Because in recent years, we have been just getting by—reducing investments in our military as the world becomes more dangerous, and avoiding tough choices.

The package before us today will sustain a much-needed rebuilding of our military after a half decade of cuts, while our troops remained in constant combat, as they do today.

We provided prioritized funding to necessary but unfunded equipment and weapons platforms. We have boosted missile defense, a program that has taken on critical importance as North Korea, unabatedly, tries to marry its nuclear warheads with new ballistic missiles.

We increased funding for the vital training that prepares our warfighter for any contingency. This legislation also supports our military families. After all, they serve, too. We included a 2.4 percent pay increase for our servicemen and -women, the largest such raise in 8 years, and they deserve it.

Within the Military Construction and Veterans portion of this bill—and I thank Chairman DENT for his leadership—military infrastructure funding has increased by 25 percent above current levels. We continue our efforts to rebuild our Armed Forces by ensuring that our warfighters have the support they need.

We cannot forget those who have served. This measure increases funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs to 5 percent over current levels to provide veterans and their families with access to medical care and other benefits they have earned and deserve.

Within the Energy and Water section of this legislation—I thank Chairman SIMPSON for his leadership—funding is prioritized for critical nuclear programs that will help strengthen our security and deter threats around the globe.

We also support the maintenance of our Nation's waterways and support the work of the Army Corps to also ensure the resilience and security of our electricity infrastructure.

We recommit to opening Yucca Mountain as a safe and secure location to permanently store the Nation's nuclear fuel and high-level radioactive wastes, and we promote basic science programs, which lay the foundation for new energy technologies.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, this package also includes funding for important legislative branch functions—and I thank Chairman YODER for his leadership—improving security to ensure